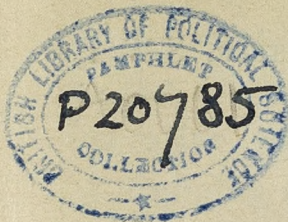


To the Men and Women Electors of the
Seaham Division of Durham



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LETTER OF ACCEPTANCE

BY

MR. SIDNEY WEBB

OF THE POSITION OF

PROSPECTIVE LABOUR CANDIDATE
FOR THE SEAHAM DIVISION

TOGETHER WITH SOME PARTICULARS
OF MR. WEBB'S CAREER



SEAHAM DIVISIONAL LABOUR PARTY

Hon. Secretary: Rev. J. R. HERRON, 52 Marlborough Street,
Seaham Harbour

JF 2051 (92)

41 GROSVENOR ROAD, WESTMINSTER, S.W. 1,
20th July 1920.

DEAR MR. HERRON,

I have your letter of the 12th instant, informing me that, at the Selection Conference of the Seaham Divisional Labour Party held at the Murton Miners' Hall on the 10th instant, I was unanimously chosen as the Prospective Candidate at the Parliamentary Election for the Division. I have since received a letter from the Executive Committee of the Labour Party stating that my prospective candidature had been definitely endorsed in accordance with the Constitution and Rules. I accept this candidature as for the next Parliamentary Election in the constituency, whenever it may occur.

How the Candidature arose.

As you know, this position was not of my seeking. It is now just upon a year ago that I began to receive requests from organisations in the Seaham Division that I would permit my name to be put forward. I held off for a long time, and suggested the choice of some one connected with the local industry. When the requests were renewed, actually from the Miners' Lodges themselves, as well as from Trade Union Branches and other bodies representing different sections of the community, I preferred to visit the constituency and address more than a dozen meetings in the various districts, in order that every one might have an opportunity of judging whether my candidature would be the one most generally acceptable. The evidence then afforded to me, together with the decision now given, leaves

me no excuse for doubt. To an invitation emanating from the Lodges of the Durham Miners' Association, and very nearly every other Trade Union and Labour organisation in the Division; joined in by leading members of the Co-operative and Friendly Societies; supported by Ministers of Religion of various denominations and by electors of all classes—by shopkeepers, professional men, officials and teachers as well as by wage-earners, and by women as well as men; and conveyed to me as the unanimous decision of the Divisional Labour Party,—I have no right to oppose my own reluctance to assume a new responsibility. In accepting the position I thank all concerned for the honour of their confidence.

A Grave Crisis.

The General Election, for which we must immediately prepare, will be one of supreme importance to every household. We are living in critical times. The present apparent prosperity is very largely fictitious. We have a Cabinet that has shown itself intellectually bankrupt, and unable to find any effective or consistent policy, whether on the Social Reconstruction that it promised for this country, or on the Restoration of Europe on which our own prosperity depends. Meanwhile the cost of living continues to rise; the shortage of houses becomes week by week actually greater and more acute, and the misery of overcrowding more widespread. We have failed to reinstate in employment many thousands of the men who fought in our defence. Moreover, there are signs of short time, workmen are being turned off in various industries, and I hear ominous threats of coming reductions of wages. The reason why practically nothing is being done by the Government to avert these evils, is that the Cabinet Ministers are seriously divided among themselves, about both home and foreign

affairs, whilst the majority of the members of the House of Commons refuse to allow any interference with capitalist profit making.

Administrative Paralysis.

The result is a paralysis of administration from which the whole nation is suffering. All the public business is in arrear. The necessary decisions are not taken. To give only one example, I count it nothing short of a scandal that, more than eighteen months after the Armistice, the development of the great industry of coal-mining should be still paralysed by the uncertainty in which the Government leaves the matter. It is this uncertainty that hinders an adequate re-equipment of the more backward mines, obstructs the much-needed increase of cottages, and prevents fresh developments for the advance of the industry. This is not a grievance of the miners alone. Because the Cabinet and the House of Commons cannot bring themselves to accept the "Nationalisation" proposed by the Miners' Federation, or even the recommendations of the Chairman of the Coal Industry Commission, and cannot find any other acceptable plan, the whole industry is made to suffer, the output of coal is far less than it would be if capital expenditure on the mines had not been suspended, the price to the consumer is needlessly increased, the export trade is restricted, the supply of cottages for the miners' families is arrested, and the very serious overcrowding continues to depress the vitality and raise the death-rate.

Housing.

Do the women of the Seaham Division realise why it is that the babies in the mining districts continue to die at so high a rate? It is partly because the Cabinet Ministers cannot make up their minds to take the action that would,

as they know, result in a great improvement in the housing and the sanitation of the mining villages. There are a hundred other reforms equally held back by the failure of the Government and Parliament to cope with the nation's pressing business.

The present Members of Parliament are to blame.

Unfortunately, the great majority of the present members of the House of Commons do not insist on the nation's work being done. They do not suffer in their own persons from the delay. They are naturally not eager for the reforms that might interfere with the profits of themselves or their friends. In fact, the Cabinet is actually prevented by the present House of Commons, no less than by the House of Lords, from even attempting to fulfil its promises of Social Reconstruction.

The Labour Party.

This is why the coming General Election is of such great importance to every man and every woman. Not until we elect quite a different House of Commons, can we get even the beginning of the New Social Order to which we aspire. I see no hope of deliverance in the Unionist or Conservative or Coalition members, who are definitely committed to opposition to what I believe to be the ideals and desires of the great mass of hard-working folk in this country, whether their labour is by hand or by brain. Nor can I put more faith in the "free" or "independent" remnant of the once-triumphant Liberals. Their present leaders, unwilling to carry forward to the new issues the reforming zeal of the Liberalism of the past, have to-day apparently no other policy on Home Affairs than a drastic reduction of public expenditure. This can only mean a calamitous restriction of the work in Housing, Education, Public Health, and the

Provision for Maternity and Infancy, Sickness, Unemployment, and Old Age; services that it is vitally important to develop rather than diminish. The only Party before the country which has worked out a definite programme of Social Reconstruction at home (set forth in detail in the pamphlet *Labour and the New Social Order*), and has outlined a comprehensive policy for the peaceful restoration of Europe, is the Labour Party, to which I have belonged ever since it was established. It is upon such a policy of Peace and Social Reconstruction—to be explained at the meetings that I hope to address in every part of the constituency—that I shall ask for the votes of the men and women of the Seaham Division.

A Partnership in Work.

A Parliamentary Candidature is of the nature of a partnership which cannot be successful unless the burden is duly shared between the candidate and his supporters. You may count on my doing my part without stint, although I must warn you that my work in London will compel me to concentrate my meetings in the Division in successive visits of a few weeks each. Those who have pressed me to stand—the members of the Miners' Lodges and other Trade Union Branches, women's societies, the Divisional Labour Party, and all the various bodies concerned—will, I am sure, not fail in their part of organising every separate local centre, and getting into communication with every elector.

An Appeal for Citizenship.

But it is no narrow faction fight in which we shall be engaged. The Labour Party is not, as is so often ignorantly asserted, a Party of Labourers; but a Party into which are welcomed all workers by hand or by brain whatever their occupation or position, who accept its principles and agree

with its proposals. It is not so much our rights that we claim, as an opportunity for every one to fulfil the duties of citizenship. Our appeal must not be to the miners only, or to those only who work for wages, or even to those only who are suffering or discontented. In every district there are men and women in other circumstances who feel as deeply as we do the evils that we deplore; who are more and more coming to recognise that the principles we expound are really akin to those by which they themselves live; and that only along the lines of such a policy as we advocate can any honest solution of the nation's social problems be found. To all such men and women in the Seaham Division, irrespective of creed or class or position, I shall appeal for an unprejudiced consideration of my proposals; confident that if they find themselves in general agreement with those views, they will not be deterred, either by partizanship or by party labels, from giving their votes for the candidate who expresses them. What must be weighed are principles, not those who are but their exponents, or those who carry the flag. I venture confidently to hope that, if at this crisis in the nation's history we can put the principles and policy of the Labour Party effectively before all the electors of the Seaham Division, we cannot fail to find among these men and women an overwhelming majority of supporters.

Looking forward to being soon with you at Seaham,

I am,

Yours sincerely,

SIDNEY WEBB.

Rev. J. R. HERRON,
Hon. Secretary of the Seaham
Divisional Labour Party.

WHO THE CANDIDATE IS.

THE following account of Mr. SIDNEY WEBB, given by one who knows him personally, will be of interest to the Electors of the Seaham Division.

Mr. Sidney Webb, whom the Seaham Divisional Labour Party has unanimously chosen as Prospective Candidate for the next Parliamentary Election, has made a considerable name for himself as author and administrator. He was born, it appears, in 1859; and after a brief experience of commerce in the City of London, gained a place in the Civil Service by open competition, spending thirteen years successively in the War Office, the Inland Revenue Department, and, finally, the Colonial Office, where he set himself to study every branch of public administration in the various parts of the British Empire. In 1891 he threw up his appointment in order to enjoy greater freedom as an elected representative; and he became a member of the London County Council, the most extensive municipal administration in the world. For eighteen years Mr. Webb was elected and re-elected to the County Council, devoting most of his time to this work; serving almost continuously as chairman of important committees, and being mainly responsible for the Council's Educational Administration. In 1892 he married Miss Beatrice Potter, who had already published the book on the Co-operative Movement which has been translated into many foreign languages, and has so largely influenced Co-operative progress. From that time forth, Mr. and Mrs. Webb, who have dwelt continuously in the same little house on the banks of the Thames at Westminster, have generally appeared as joint authors, and they have written more books than can be even mentioned here. Every workman, and nearly every employer, knows their *History of Trade Unionism*; though neither employers nor workmen all follow it up by reading *Industrial Democracy*,

in which every feature of industrial organisation is dissected and appraised with scientific candour. Unfortunately our elected councillors and Poor Law Guardians are not equally familiar with Mr. and Mrs. Webb's works on Local Government, which were the outcome of many years' investigation of every form of local administration from Berwick-on-Tweed to Penzance. Those concerned to get a reduction of rates ought to read Mr. Webb's little book on *Grants in Aid*.

Mr. Webb, and Mrs. Webb also, for they always work together, have found themselves called upon to serve as members of numerous Royal Commissions and official Committees on various subjects, especially during the war, when they were almost continuously engaged in this public service. Perhaps the most onerous of these tasks was that imposed by Mrs. Webb's appointment in 1905 as a member of the Royal Commission on the Poor Law. This entailed on both husband and wife nearly four years' toil—like all these services, entirely unpaid—and it resulted in the publication of a Minority Report proposing the complete Abolition of the Poor Law, and the future provision for all the separate classes of persons needing treatment, by the directly elected District, Municipal or County Councils, under the Education, Old Age Pensions, and other Acts, as citizens and not as paupers. This revolutionary proposal, at first scouted, has now been definitely adopted by the Cabinet as the Government policy. But the enemies to reform work behind the scenes, and the Government undertaking will apparently not get carried out without further pressure. On the whole subject of the *Prevention of Destitution*, and the scientific handling of the problem of Unemployment, Mr. and Mrs. Webb have written some of the most influential books and reports.

It was, however, neither Poor Law nor Local Government that induced the Miners' Federation of Great Britain to insist on having Mr. Webb appointed as one of the six workmen's representatives on the momentous Coal Industry Commission, but his long-continued work for Labour and his knowledge of economics and statistics. Every one knows

that Mr. Webb, besides taking his share in the dramatic cross-examination of witnesses that the electors of the Seaham Division will remember, was the principal draftsman of the elaborate Report by which the six miners' representatives sought to supplement the concessions that they had wrung from Mr. Justice Sankey. Though the Government has not yet carried out its undertaking, yet the solemn pledge by Mr. Bonar Law, on behalf of the Cabinet, that the Government would adopt Mr. Justice Sankey's First Report "in the spirit and in the letter," counts as one of the triumphs of the Miners' Federation.

But there is no end to these books and reports, the fruit of Mr. and Mrs. Webb's thirty years of unremitting study. Who would have thought, for instance, that Mr. Webb would have written a manual for the managers of industrial undertakings, entitled *The Works Manager To-day?* Mr. Webb, who has lectured on such subjects for many years, and was the principal founder of the London School of Economics and Political Science, now the largest and most influential institution of its kind in the world, had conferred on him in 1911, by the Senate of London University, the honorary position of Professor of Public Administration. He is a member of the Development Commission, and of numerous official committees and educational trusts and governing bodies.

Of the Fabian Society Mr. Webb was one of the earliest members, writing one of the celebrated series of *Fabian Essays in Socialism* as long ago as 1887. He was at that time one of the most persistent advocates of an independently organised Labour Party, of which he has been an affiliated member since its very formation, being elected since 1915 to its Executive Committee. He has never hitherto sought to enter the House of Commons, but at the General Election of 1918 he consented to stand as Labour Candidate for London University, reputed a hopeless constituency, where, however, he had a narrow shave of being elected, failing only by 661 votes. The question whether Mr. Webb is to be sent to serve at Westminster will now be for the electors of the Seaham Division to answer.

*To the Electors of the
Seaham Parliamentary Division.*

IN commending to you the prospective Candidature of Mr. SIDNEY WEBB, we confidently believe that we are most efficiently considering the greatest needs and best interests of the Division. The very brief survey of his life and work given in this publication warrants the ability of our Candidate, and personal association with him shows him to be easily approachable and keenly sympathetic towards all human interests.

To secure Mr. Webb's return at the next Election, it is needful that we maintain an organisation which shall provide a constant supply of accurate information on political affairs. We, therefore, appeal to all Electors, men and women, to become members of the Divisional Labour Party. The membership fee is ONE SHILLING. Fuller information may be obtained from the worker who hands you this pamphlet, from the Secretary of the Labour Party in your district, or from the undersigned officers of the Division.

Yours faithfully,

FRANK QUINN, *President*,
1 Stanhope St., Wheatley Hill.
PETER FARRELLY, *Vice-President*,
9 Sixth St., Blackhall.
J. H. BLACKWELL, *Vice-President*,
67 Longnewton St., Seaham Harbour.
ALEX. PURVIS, *Treasurer*,
Trimdon Colliery.
WM. PARKINSON, *Financial Secretary*,
New Pilgrim St., Murton Colliery.
J. R. HERRON, *Hon. Secretary*,
52 Marlborough St., Seaham Harbour.

Seaham
Divisional
Labour
Party.

SEAHAM DIVISIONAL LABOUR PARTY.

LIST OF LOCAL SECRETARIES.

- Seaham Harbour.**—Mr. J. H. BLACKWELL, 67 Longnewton St., Dawdon, Seaham Harbour.
- Seaham Colliery.**—Mr. R. CONN, 14 Earl St., Seaham Colliery, Co. Durham.
- Blackhall.**—Mr. PETER FARRELLY, 9 Sixth St., Blackhall, Castle Eden.
- Easington.**—Mr. GEORGE BLOOMFIELD, Olive House, Easington Colliery.
- Murton.**—Mr. JAS. HOLMES, 39 Talbot St., Murton, Co. Durham.
- Haswell.**—Mr. E. H. GULLIVER, Mary St., Haswell Lane, Co. Durham.
- Horden.**—Mr. HEDLEY MASON, J.P., 12 West View, Horden, Co. Durham.
- Hutton Henry.**—Mr. W. C. ROBINSON, 2 Railway Cottages, Wingate Station.
- Kelloe.**—Mr. M. DUDDIN, 14 South View, East Hetton, Co. Durham.
- Shotton.**—Mr. ORTON COWLEY, Millbank Terrace, Shotton, Co. Durham.
- South Hetton.**—Mr. M. WHITE, 34 Smith St., South Hetton, Co. Durham.
- Thornley.**—Mr. HUBERT TUNNEY, 6 High St., Thornley, Co. Durham.
- Trimdon Grange.**—Mr. GEO. LONSDALE, Miners' Sec., Trimdon Grange, Co. Durham.
- Trimdon Colliery.**—Mr. J. R. DINNING, 5 Deaf Hill Terrace, Trimdon, Co. Durham.
- Wheatley Hill.**—Mr. F. QUINN, 1 Stanhope St., Wheatley Hill, Co. Durham.
- Wingate.**—Mr. T. H. DOIDGE, Miners' Sec., Wingate, Co. Durham.

Hon. Secretary for the Division:

REV. J. R. HERRON, 52 Marlborough St., Seaham Harbour.